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A
PARTICULAR ACCOUNT

OF THE

BATTLE

OF

Bunker, or Breed's Hill,

ON THE

17TH OF JUNE, 1775.

BY A CITIZEN OF BOSTON.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

As there have been several accounts, heretofore given, of the Battle of Bunker Hill, it may be thought unnecessary again to bring the subject before the public, and impossible to say any thing of importance, not to be found in former narratives. It may be observed, that some of those accounts have been found to be partial and incomplete ; and that some were written, not so much for the purpose of giving a correct view of *all* the events, as to establish particular facts, before denied or doubted. It has been suggested that a more *particular* yet brief statement of that enterprise would be acceptable to the public at this time. Inquiries are often made on the subject, and are likely to be repeated, as a formal celebration of that ever-memorable event is soon to take place.

The most correct and perfect account, which has been given, was by Colonel S. SWETT, by way of Appendix to a second edition of the Life of General ISRAEL PUTNAM, published about seven years ago. The design of the writer of the following narrative is to give a *concise* statement, and yet to record whatever is material and important. Having examined and compared all former accounts with diligence, and received some additional statements, he believes that it will not be considered a mere *republication* of other and earlier accounts. He has confined himself to the transactions of the day and the event, with reference only to some circumstances closely connected therewith ; nor has he indulged in any remarks which belong more properly to the historian or to the orator.

Boston, May 20th, 1825.

BATTLE

OF

BUNKER OR BREED'S HILL.

THE battle in Charlestown, Massachusetts, which was fought between the British and Americans, on the 17th of June, 1775, was an event of great interest and importance. It was the *first* real trial of strength and courage between the troops of the parent country and of the provinces. The affair at *Lexington* and *Concord*, on the 19th of April preceding, could hardly be called a *battle*. Though a few guns were fired by the militia assembled under arms at Lexington, after they were attacked, yet no attempt was made by them to oppose the march of the British, who were *ten* times more numerous.* And at Concord Bridge,

* General *Heath* says, "The British advanced towards the militia, ordered them to disperse, huzzaed, and fired upon them. Several were killed and wounded, and the rest dispersed." Gordon says, "The huzzaing and firing produced an *immediate* dispersion; though some of the militia fired before, or as they were dispersing." The British account was, "that the militia, when ordered to disperse, immediately retired in *confusion*; but that several guns were fired upon the king's troops from behind the stone wall; by which one man was wounded, and Major *Pitcairn's* horse was shot." Mrs. Warren says, "The British made an attack upon the *defenceless* peasants at Lexington—that Colonel *Smith* ordered them to lay down their arms and disperse; at the same time ordered his troops to fire, and proceeded without molestation to Concord."

where a part of the British troops was opposed with much spirit and bravery, there was nothing really deserving the name of a *formal battle*. The British were pursued, indeed, on their return to Boston, but in a very irregular manner, as the militia collected on the occasion were not sufficiently numerous to justify them in offering a serious contest. But that at *Breed's Hill* was a hard-fought battle. Large detachments of American and British troops were closely engaged in martial combat for *several hours*.* The contest was most severe and bloody. A fair trial was exhibited of the military *powers* of each.

It would seem that a battle must have been expected by the Americans; yet so little was done by way of previous preparation, and so unequal were they in discipline, in arms, and in numbers, to meet the British, that it may be considered by some as a rash and imprudent measure to *challenge* an engagement as they did. The event, indeed, proved their courage and heroism, notwithstanding their final defeat. They contended against the enemy with a *desperate* resolution, as if the liberties of their country depended upon the issue of that single battle. And, perhaps, it is not too much to say, that it did so in a great degree.

The British received a formidable check. They had melancholy evidence of the resolution and bravery of the provincial troops. From that battle, they learned to appreciate aright the character of Americans. They were convinced of the great suffering and bloodshed which would attend the contest in which they

* The first attack was made between two and three o'clock; and the Americans did not retreat till after six o'clock. It is said, in a letter from a British officer, that the battle continued nearly *four* hours.

were engaged. And, from that day, they feared to attempt (what, if they had attempted, *might* have proved most disastrous to the American cause) an attack upon our undisciplined troops, and which, as a regular army, furnished with all necessary military stores and arms, they ought to have done.

We have suggested, that the battle of Breed's Hill was a *rash* affair on the part of the Americans. It was so considered, at the time, by many judicious men in the Provincial Congress and Committee of Safety, though the majority of the *latter* did finally sanction the enterprise. Even *Warren*, ardent and resolute as he was, considered it a desperate undertaking. No reasonable man could have supposed that the Americans would maintain their position so near Boston, where the British had 10,000 regular troops, and when they had command of the waters of Charles river by their ships of war. Had the latter been as successful as they had reason to calculate, they would, with the troops* they landed at Charlestown, have driven the Americans† from their works (which afford-

* There are different accounts of the number of British troops engaged in this battle. Some have stated them to be three, and others, five thousand. General Gage, in his official account, said there were about 2000. By comparing several early statements, it appears that somewhat more than 3000 first landed at Charlestown, and made two attacks upon the Americans; and that about 1000 passed over, afterwards, as a reinforcement; and, joining those of the first detachment who survived, made the third attack, when the redoubt was carried.

† The whole number of provincials engaged did not, probably, much exceed 2000. Some, indeed, have supposed there were only about 1500. Those who went on to Breed's Hill the evening of the 16th, have usually been estimated at 1000: being *Prescott's*, parts of *Bridge's* and *Frye's* regiments, a detachment of 120, with four lieutenants, from General *Putnam's* regiment, under command of Captain *Knowlton*;

ed but a partial shelter, almost destitute as they were of cannon as well as of powder); and pursued them to Cambridge, where General *Ward* was stationed with the main body of the provincial troops; who would probably have been routed by such a powerful force.

The plan of taking possession of the heights of Charlestown was adopted, in consequence of intelligence that the British general intended to occupy that position, and also the high land on Dorchester Neck, on the south of Boston, in order to extend his situation, and to take advantage of possessing these commanding places, to attack the provincials at Cambridge or Roxbury, whenever he might think it proper.* It

and one artillery company. The regiments, at this time, consisted of ten companies of sixty men each; but very few of them were *full*. The reinforcements, which were sent on the next day, though belonging to several regiments, did not probably exceed 12 or 1300, (and some of these arrived only in time to protect and cover the retreat.) These consisted of two regiments from New Hampshire, under *Stark* and *Reed*; two more companies of *Putnam's* regiment, commanded by *Chester* and *Clark*; parts of *Little's*, *Whitcomb's*, *Brewer's*, *Nixon's*, *Gerrish's*, and *Gardner's* regiments, the latter of which was not ordered on to the field till a late hour, and after the first attack of the British, though its brave commander was anxious to march at the first alarm. There is proof that only parts, even of these incomplete regiments, were in the battle.

* Soon after the affair at Lexington and Concord, of the 19th of April, the "minute men" (so called) and others, to the number of about 15,000, assembled in the vicinity of Boston. Many of them were without efficient and complete equipments. In powder they were very deficient. And as to artillery, it was little more than a *name*. Of these men, nearly 10,000 belonged to Massachusetts; Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island furnished the residue. General *Ward* was appointed commander in chief by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts; General *Thomas* was second in command, and was stationed at Roxbury. *Washington* had not taken the chief command. He was appointed, about the middle of June, by the Continental Congress, and arrived at Cambridge on the 3d of July; when the troops were soon

was not until the 15th of June that the Americans determined to occupy the former spot. Why more time was not allowed for preparation is not known. It is probable there was an apprehension that the British intended to take immediate possession.*

The detachments ordered upon this most hazardous enterprise consisted of about 1000 men, under the particular and immediate command of Colonel *William Prescott* of Pepperell in the county of Middlesex. Far the greater part of the detachment belonged to Massachusetts, and chiefly to that county, and included a part of Colonel *Ebenezer Bridge's* and a part of *Frye's* regiments, with about 120 from General † *Israel Putnam's*

organized as a *national* army. It is probable, however, that, before he took the command, *all* the troops collected acknowledged General Ward as chief; and that there was an understanding to act in concert, and with some regularity and system, though the organization of the troops was not *perfect*. A contrary supposition would imply extreme inattention or want of military knowledge, both in the Committee of Safety and in the officers assembled; several of whom had been in the campaigns of 1756, 1757, and 1758.

* It is said by those who were then living, and in a situation to know all the circumstances connected with the enterprise, that it was undertaken at the particular instance of *General Putnam*, and that Colonel Prescott requested to have the post, in which he so bravely distinguished himself. *Putnam* expressed the opinion, that something must be done (unprepared as they then were for offensive operations), to employ the men and to accustom them to military service. He conducted the expedition to Noddle's and Hog Islands, in Boston harbour, the last of May, to prevent a large quantity of sheep from falling into the hands of the British, in which he discovered great activity and courage; and on the 10th of June he marched from Cambridge to Charlestown, with most of the provincial troops, collected at the former place. This was done in full sight of the British in Boston, and with a view to excite a spirit of emulation and courage in the militia, who were then assembled in arms for the defence of the country.

† Though called *General*, he had *then* command only of a regiment, which was the case of several general officers in Massachusetts at that time. The other Connecticut troops were stationed at Roxbury.

regiment (from Connecticut), with Captain *Knowlton* as their chief officer.* *Putnam* accompanied this detachment, and, according to the testimony of several respectable witnesses who were in the expedition, had the superintendence of it; or gave direction and advice, which, even if he attended as a volunteer, must have had much influence. That he had the *official* and *authorized command*,† may be difficult to prove by

* Judge *Grovesnor*, now living, was a lieutenant in this corps, and was wounded the next day at the rail fence. The statement lately made by him is as follows:—"I was one of the detachment from General *Putnam's* regiment, posted at Cambridge. On the evening of 16th June, Captain *Knowlton*, with four subalterns and 120 men, were detached and marched to Breed's Hill, with others of Massachusetts. General *Putnam* was with us and attended to laying out the ground for erecting the redoubt. He returned to Cambridge that night, and attended early the next morning. He was on the hill repeatedly during the day; and particularly at the *posting of the troops in the redoubt, and at the arm of the ditch leading north towards Mystick River, and at the rail fence adjoining the river.* Colonel *Prescott* was constantly with the troops; but General *Putnam* was backwards and forwards from Cambridge during the day, to bring on reinforcements. He commanded and ordered the troops engaged with regularity and satisfaction, so far as I know."—"When the British landed at Moreton's Point, the detachment under *Knowlton*, from *Putnam's* regiment, was ordered by the General to take post at a rail fence on the left of the breastwork. This was promptly executed. Each man was furnished with a pound of powder and forty-eight balls. *No corps was posted at the rail fence, save our own, at the time the fire began.*"

† Different opinions have prevailed on this point. But on comparing all the circumstances and transactions of the occasion, by recollecting the conduct of *Putnam*, as stated by several persons in the battle, and by other citizens who were on Charlestown heights as volunteers, and by assuming that such an important enterprise would not have been undertaken by advice of the Council of War or Committee of Safety, without some system (although the short time there was to make arrangement, and the imperfect organization of the American troops prevented it being entirely regular and complete), it will appear that he was, in fact, the commander in chief. He evidently *acted as such*; and

direct evidence. The orderly-book of General *Ward* is silent on the subject. *Putnam* was a very active as well as brave officer, and had seen much military service in a former war between France and England. Colonel *Gridley* was also with the detachment, and acted as engineer.

This detachment of provincial troops proceeded to the peninsula of Charlestown late in the evening of the 16th of June. They paused on Bunker Hill; but after some consultation they concluded to advance to Breed's Hill, which lies nearer to Boston by about 120 rods, and is about the same distance from the banks of Charles River.* It was nearly midnight when they

either had the appointment by General Ward, or by designation and consent of the Council of War. He superintended the works the night of the 16th; was there again early on the morning of the 17th; directed Knowlton to the rail fence, when the enemy landed at Moreton's Point; advised to carry the entrenching tools to Bunker's Hill, and there ordered another breastwork to be thrown up, though when the enemy advanced to the attack, he relinquished it, and marched his men to the lines; was seen riding along the lines, directing and animating the troops; often rode to the Neck and beyond, to urge on the recruits; and, in company with Prescott, covered the rear of the Americans on their retreat. Still, perhaps he had not that entire and complete command which would have been given, if the army had been perfectly organized, and the expedition regularly and maturely prepared. That he was often on Bunker Hill, where he could take a full view of the whole ground and of all the troops engaged, both British and American, and rode to the Neck to hasten and urge on the reinforcements, instead of remaining posted either at the redoubt or at the rail fence, go to prove rather that he was commander of the expedition, than that he was *inactive or out of place*.

* In a direct line, Copps' Hill, at the northern part of Boston, where the British had a fortress, is about half a mile from Breed's Hill in Charlestown. No reason can be given why the Americans chose to fortify Breed's rather than Bunker Hill, but that it was nearer to Boston. Bunker Hill is much more elevated, and would have been more difficult to attack by the enemy.

began to throw up a redoubt (as had been previously ordered by a Council of War at Cambridge), for a partial defence against the British, who they could not but believe would soon attack them. As a fortress, of which they were to retain permanent possession, they could not have proposed it; for, without more cannon and a greater supply of ammunition, they must have known that they could not long hold out against the superior and formidable force of the British in Boston. Such was the opinion even of the sanguine and heroic Putnam, expressly given by him to General *Warren*, when he came on the field, just before the enemy first advanced to the attack.

In the course of the night, when the works were in forwardness and the men industriously engaged in completing them, General Putnam returned to his quarters in Cambridge. But early in the morning, on hearing the cannonade of the British, which began soon after the dawn of day, from their fort at the northern part of Boston, and their ships of war in Charles River, he repaired again with great alacrity to Charlestown. During the night, Colonel *Prescott*, attended by Major *Brooks*,* proceeded to the margin of the river, to ascertain whether the British were alarmed and were preparing to attack them; but all appeared quiet. At an early hour of the morning, Prescott sent to General

* Brooks was major of Bridge's regiment. He commanded a battalion of minute men in the affair at Concord on the 19th of April. During the war of the revolution, he held a colonel's commission, and was repeatedly distinguished for acts of bravery, and in high estimation as a correct disciplinarian. Afterwards he was major general of militia, and governor of Massachusetts. He died the first of March last, universally respected and beloved, sincerely and deeply lamented.

Ward,* at Cambridge, for provisions and reinforcements. His men were fatigued, and the works were not finished. No answer and no supplies were received. At nine o'clock, Major Brooks, as a confidential officer, was despatched to head quarters, with an urgent request for more supplies and men. But on this message, requiring the greatest despatch, he was obliged to travel on foot. No horse was to be procured. It was nearly ten when he arrived at Cambridge. A consultation was immediately had between General Ward and others, as to the propriety of sending more troops from the main body at that place. It was believed the British would avail of the circumstance of a great portion of the provincials being at Charlestown, to make an attack on Cambridge, by passing directly over the bay from the western part of Boston,† disperse the men retained there, and destroy the scanty stores collected; which would prove a disaster that it would be almost impossible to repair. It was consid-

* It is argued, that if General Putnam had the regular and official command of the expedition, *he* would have made the request to Ward for provisions and recruits; and that Prescott would have applied to Putnam, and not to Ward, for any assistance he needed. That Putnam was on the field early, there is full proof; and it also appears that he was active at the redoubt, and in his endeavours to bring on more men. It is not improbable that he joined with Prescott in the message to Ward for reinforcements. It is evident that there was a want of *perfect* organization and system in the military movements of the day. But this does not disprove that Putnam was considered and acted as commander in chief. And we cannot but believe that, as there were commanders of companies and of regiments, and as Prescott was stationed at the redoubt, there was a commander in chief of the whole, who superintended and directed the movements of all the troops concerned in the expedition.

† At this time the British had not landed at Charlestown, and it was uncertain where they would make an attack.

ered necessary, therefore, to retain a large force at Cambridge, notwithstanding the perilous situation and urgent request of Putnam and Prescott.

The remainder of Putnam's regiment, stationed in the easterly part of Cambridge, near Inman's farm, so called, were very desirous of marching to Charlestown; but General Ward believed their service would be more important in checking the British, should they come out from Boston and make an attack upon head quarters.* At a later hour, however, they were permitted to proceed to Charlestown, for the support of their fellow citizens there engaged. These were commanded by Captains Chester, Coit, and Clark, and reached the rail fence, where Knowlton was stationed, just as the engagement began.

At an early hour in the forenoon, Gardner's regiment was ordered to proceed down the Charlestown road, near the foot of Prospect Hill, and there to remain till further orders should be given them.† In this situation they remained until after one o'clock; when, seeing the enemy's boats pass over to Charlestown, the Colonel consulted with his officers and it was agreed to march immediately to the heights of Charlestown.

In the meantime, it had been concluded by General Ward to send to Medford for some New Hampshire militia, under Colonels Stark and Reed,‡ who were

* For a similar reason, no doubt, the provincial troops at Roxbury were not ordered to reinforce those at Charlestown. It would have left the American camp, in that place, wholly exposed to the British; who might have easily marched from Boston and made an attack upon it.

† Scammons' regiment was ordered to Lechmere's Point, and Little's still nearer to the Neck.

‡ This proves that Ward had command of all the men in the vicinity, even from other colonies; or that there was a disposition to act in concert, under his direction, for the common defence.

ordered to Bunker Hill, for a support to the men already there. It was between ten and eleven o'clock when the messenger was despatched from Cambridge with these orders. The brave New Hampshire men soon prepared to obey. But it was about one o'clock when they left Medford; and must, therefore, have been two o'clock, or later, when they reached Bunker Hill. They were in season, however, to repair to the lines on the left of the redoubt, at the breastwork and rail fence (where the Connecticut troops, under Captain Knowlton, were, by the special direction of General Putnam, already stationed), when the attack was first made by the enemy.

Putnam, who rode to Bunker Hill, and even to the Neck, or still farther, to hasten on the reinforcements, which were requested and expected as soon as the British landed at Moreton's Point, met the New Hampshire troops, and entreated their immediate presence at the lines; with which they as readily complied. He also probably directed or advised the position most suitable for them to take. Parts of Little's regiment, sent on from Cambridge, and of Gardner's, already mentioned, arrived on Bunker Hill just before or about this time, and were directed chiefly to the rail fence, but some to the redoubt. At this time also it was, or a few moments earlier (for it was just before the British made the first attack), that Judge Winthrop saw Putnam and Warren conversing together a little in the rear of the eastern part of the breastwork, on the left of the fort. A soldier in Knowlton's company also states, "that, just as the battle began, he saw General Putnam earnestly engaged in rallying some men, who were retreating towards Bunker Hill; and that, after

he had drove back as many as he could, he rode towards the redoubt."

In the course of the forenoon, notwithstanding the heavy fire of the British from their ships of war, and their fort in Boston, a redoubt was thrown up by the Americans of about eight rods square, and a breastwork, on the left of it, extending down the eastern declivity of the hill, about seventy feet. East of this breastwork, and a little northerly in the rear of it, was the rail fence, at which the few Connecticut men were first placed, and afterwards the New Hampshire troops and two more companies of the Connecticut forces, as well as some belonging to Massachusetts, who came on about the same time.* The rail fence stretched almost to Mystick River; and an effort was made by the Connecticut troops, under Knowlton, to render it something like a protection, by adding another fence in the vicinity, and throwing up some grass recently mown against it.

Colonel Prescott commanded in and at the redoubt, which had just been finished under his inspection. He had sent two companies down into the street towards the ferry way to reconnoitre, but they were soon recalled and placed in and near the fort. Some of the men, with Prescott, were on the exterior of the redoubt, but near it, on the right and left. He seems to have had the sole command of this important post, while Putnam was urging on the recruits and inspecting the troops in other parts of the peninsula.

* It appears, from some accounts, that a part of the New Hampshire militia, and those of Massachusetts, were placed at the breastwork, in the low land between the redoubt and the rail fence.

Not only was the detachment, under Captain Knowlton, ordered to the rail fence on the left, but most of the fresh troops which came on to the field, as reinforcements, were directed to take the same position. The redoubt was sufficiently furnished with men to act with effect, though deficient in cannon, ammunition, and bayonets, to enable them to repel the British, who were superior both in numbers and equipments. A part of *Little's* regiment seems to have been the only troops ordered to the redoubt, in addition to those stationed there at an earlier hour.

On the left, at the breastwork and rail fence, a large force became indispensable. The movements of the British, soon after they formed for the attack, fully indicated their purpose to march a large detachment near the margin of Mystick River, at a considerable distance northeast of the redoubt, and then to make an attack in the rear of it. A great portion of their troops were so disposed of as soon to render this plan most evident; while another party of them prepared to advance directly in front of the redoubt. Prescott was in full preparation to receive them at the fort; and all the attention and activity of Putnam were put in requisition to meet them on the left, and to prevent their advancing in that direction. Accordingly we find, from all the testimony given at the time and subsequently, that General Putnam was making every possible effort to forward fresh troops to that quarter. For this purpose, soon after the British landed, he rode to the Neck and beyond, and urged the scattered companies and parts of regiments, which he found, to proceed with the greatest despatch to the rail fence and to the breastwork on the left of the fort.

The British were some time in determining upon the particular mode of attack, and in forming after they had decided;* it was between two and three o'clock when they first advanced to the bloody contest.† This was done in two separate bodies; one directed towards the redoubt on Breed's Hill, and the other towards the rail fence on the left and near Mystick River. The British began the fire upon the provincials when at a considerable distance, and without much effect. But the latter reserved their fire, by the express orders of *Putnam* and *Prescott*, no doubt by previous agreement, until the enemy had approached within about eight rods; when they poured forth a most destructive volley of small arms, and continued it for some minutes (as rank after rank of the British succeeded), by which a great number of the assailants were cut to pieces, while comparatively few of the Americans received any injury. The British troops were soon thrown into confusion, and retreated to the margin of the river, where they first landed.

The British officers soon rallied their men, and formed anew for a second attack; during which General *Putnam* rode to the Neck to press on such of the militia as might have advanced thus far, and some of whom were reluctant to march nearer to the place of slaughter. The incessant firing of a sloop of war and

* They landed near Moreton's Point, S. E. from Breed's Hill.

† *Botta* says the Americans laboured at their entrenchments during the whole day; and that the British did not make the attack till towards night. He is not entirely correct in this statement. He is also mistaken, in saying, that the British had floating batteries in Mystick River, and the Americans a competent artillery.

of several floating batteries in Charles River,* rendered it extremely dangerous to pass on to the peninsula. *Putnam* rode over the Neck repeatedly, to show that himself was without fear, and that it was possible to pass unhurt.

The British soon advanced a second time as before ; a portion towards the redoubt, and others to the breast-work and rail fence on the east.† The Americans were prepared to receive them with equal resolution as at the first assault ; and orders were again given by *Putnam*, *Prescott*, and other officers, to withhold their fire until the enemy should approach even nearer than before. The enemy were again repulsed with great slaughter. They soon shrunk from the tremendous fire of the provincials ;‡ and a second time retreated to the banks of the river. The British soldiers were discouraged, and were not led on again to the attack, but by repeated orders and threats, and until a reinforcement arrived from Boston. The Americans, on the contrary, were elated by their repeated success ; though the officers must have perceived the difficulty of long maintaining their position, unless they could receive a new supply of ammunition and large reinforcements of men.

The third attack was not made by the British without considerable delay. They sent to Boston for more troops ; which were forwarded, indeed, with all possible despatch, accompanied by several officers of high

* It has been supposed by some that there were floating batteries in Mystick River also ; but this was a mistake.

† It was at this period that the town of Charlestown was set on fire by the British, and the whole burnt, consisting of about 500 buildings.

‡ The British officers said the Americans fought like " devils."

rank and great military skill and experience. During this interval, it appears that General Putnam again rode to the Neck, and to a short distance beyond, where some provincials had assembled from the neighboring towns. Some of these were unwilling to proceed, as it was very dangerous passing the Neck, and as they expected the troops on the Heights must soon retreat. At this time, also, unfortunately, a part of the artillery, from a defect in the apparatus of their guns, or some great error in judgment, retired from the field of action; which served to discourage the militia from advancing.

These men belonged to Massachusetts, were imperfectly organized, and unaccustomed to military discipline. The resolute and brave, however, readily hastened to the relief of those who had already been long engaged. Having urged the advance of these troops, *Putnam* returned to those he had left at the lines, with the great despatch for which he was always distinguished; and arrived some time before the reinforcements came up, to encourage the men and to direct their movements on the renewed attack of the British, which was then expected.

In the third and last attack the enemy conducted with much deliberation. They were convinced of the great importance of their field artillery; and particular care was taken to have it accompany the troops. It was taken to the eastern declivity of Breed's Hill, between the rail fence and the breastwork, where it was directed along the line of the Americans at the latter position, and a part pointed also into the opening or gate-way of the redoubt, which was on the north-

eastern corner. The redoubt was now attacked also on the southeastern and southwestern sides by the enemy with fixed bayonets. At the same time, a column of the British advanced against the provincials posted at the rail fence on the extreme left.

Those in the redoubt were destitute of bayonets, and their powder also was soon expended. In this situation, after having made a most resolute resistance for some time, but without a possibility of maintaining their ground, and in hope of saving the lives of his brave men, the intrepid *Prescott* ordered a retreat. To effect this, surrounded as he was by the British, was a difficult task. The troops on the left were ordered to cover them as they retired.* And this important service was performed with ability and despatch. *Putnam* and *Prescott*, having braved the enemy as long as hope remained, were very active in conducting the retreat.† Though many of the Americans were killed or wounded by the British troops, who pursued them to Bunker Hill, a great degree of regularity and order was maintained by the attention and activity of the officers,‡ as-

* The troops at the rail fence were closely engaged with a column of the British, when those at the redoubt were obliged to retreat. They fought with great bravery, and had hitherto prevented the advance of the enemy, whose plan was to force their way and turn this flank of the provincials. Here the New Hampshire men under Colonels Stark and Reed, and the Connecticut men under Captains Knowlton, Chester, Clark, and Lieutenant Grosvenor, gave proofs of a firmness and courage, which richly entitled them to the glory of a victory.

† According to the statement of several persons who were in this battle, *Putnam* and *Prescott* kept in the rear of the provincials as they retreated, and were much exposed to the fire of the British troops, who pursued them to Bunker Hill.

‡ It is stated, in a report of a committee of the Provincial Congress,

sisted by some fresh troops, who arrived at this time. This was between six and seven o'clock. Here General *Putnam* proposed to make a stand and fortify ; but the plan was too desperate to meet the approbation of any other officers. " He wished, at least, to face the enemy and given them one more fire before they left the peninsula." But the men were too much exhausted and too destitute of ammunition to comply with his proposal. The provincials, therefore, passed over the Neck ; and some posted themselves at Winter and Prospect Hills, within a mile and a half of Bunker Hill, and others proceeded to *Ward's* head quarters, at Cambridge, a distance of about three miles.

Just at the moment the word was given to retreat, General *Warren*, who was near the redoubt, received a musket ball in the head, and immediately expired. He was President of the Provincial Congress and of the Committee of Safety at this time ; and three days before had been appointed a Major General of the Massachusetts troops. On this occasion, he was merely a volunteer. His ardent and patriotic feelings led him to the scene of danger, as soon as he heard of the threatened attack. He was among the most eminent of the *many* brave men, who, at that critical period, were ready to sacrifice every thing for the liberties of the country.

" that the retreat was conducted with more regularity, than could be expected of troops, who had been no longer under discipline, and many of whom never before saw an engagement ; and that the retreat of the men from the redoubt would have been effectually cut off, had it not happened that the flanking party of the enemy was checked by a party of our men, at the rail fence, who fought with the utmost bravery." These belonged chiefly to Connecticut and New Hampshire.

The slaughter, on this occasion, was very great. The British had nearly 1500 killed and wounded ; and the Americans estimated theirs at about 350. Some statements have given different numbers. But the above may be considered as very near the truth. Governor Gage's account, prepared soon after the battle, gave only 3000 in the engagement ; and 1100 killed and wounded. It was his policy to make a favourable report. From the most accurate calculation, it is evident that the whole number of the British engaged could not have been less than 4500 (some suppose about 5000); and soon after the battle it was reported and generally believed, that the whole number of the enemy killed and wounded amounted to 1492 ; ninety of which were commissioned officers. Of the provincials, 250 were wounded and 136 killed and missing ; thirty of the latter were afterwards known to have returned to their respective homes the night following the battle.

Of the officers killed or mortally wounded in the provincial regiments, the principal were General JOSEPH WARREN, Colonel THOMAS GARDNER, who survived a few days : Lieutenant Colonel PARKER, who was mortally wounded, and died the week after in prison in Boston ; Majors M'Clary and Moore. The numbers of men killed or wounded in the several regiments engaged, were as follows. In *Prescott's*, 42 killed and 28 wounded : in *Bridge's*, 16 killed and 30 wounded ; in *Frye's*, 15 killed and 31 wounded ;* in the detachment from Putnam's regiment, consisting of about 250, 15 were killed and 30 wounded. Of the

* Only parts of Bridge's and Frye's regiments were in the battle.

two New Hampshire regiments, under Stark and Reed (the latter of which was not full), 15 were killed and 45 wounded ; in Little's, 7 killed and 23 wounded ; in Brewer's, 7 killed and 11 wounded ; in Gardner's, 6 killed and 7 wounded ; in Whitcomb's, 5 killed and 8 wounded : and a few belonging to Nixon's and Gerrish's regiments.

In referring to the officers, who particularly distinguished themselves on this ever-memorable occasion, by their activity, their zeal, and courage, we may justly name General ISRAEL PUTNAM of Connecticut ; Colonels WILLIAM PRESCOTT, EBENEZER BRIDGE, JAMES FRYE, and MOSES LITTLE ; Colonels JOHN STARK and JAMES READ, both of New Hampshire ; General POMEROY, Lieutenant Colonels JOHN ROBINSON and WILLIAM BUCKMINSTER, Major HENRY WOOD, (General WARREN, Colonel GARDNER, Lieutenant Colonel PARKER, and Majors M'CLARY and MOORE, who were slain or mortally wounded in the action), Captains KKWOLTON, CHESTER, COIT, and CLARK, Lieutenants GROSVENOR, KEYES, DANA, and HILLS, all of Connecticut ; Captain HENRY DEARBORN of New Hampshire ; and Captains BURNHAM, TREVETT, FORD, WALKER, BANCROFT, and Ensign THOMAS MILLER,* &c. Many others exhibited great proofs of patriotism and courage, whose names it is not in our power particularly to mention.

The survivors of that brave and heroic band of freemen, who made such a resolute stand against the British troops, on this occasion, which are recollected, are

* Those not of Connecticut or New Hampshire belonged to Massachusetts.

General HENRY DEARBORN, Major JOHN BURNHAM, Captain R. TREVETT, Judge GROSVENOR, General JOHN KEYES,* General BENJAMIN PIERCE, Deacon THOMAS MILLER, Major DANIEL JACKSON, Captain BENJAMIN DANA, JOHN BRAZER, Esq. and Mr TIMOTHY THOMPSON.

The Americans justly considered this defeat a great disaster, but they did not despond. It taught them the courage of their men, and the necessity of greater discipline and preparation. The want of system and of military subordination was fully perceived. To this, in part, was attributed the final failure of that glorious enterprise. It would be unjust, perhaps, to accuse any one, then in *high* civil or military authority, of inactivity or want of spirit and zeal.† The contest was a glorious one to the Americans; for, unprepared and unfurnished as they were with military stores and implements, a different result could not have been justly expected. That greater reinforcements were not provided, was perhaps the fault of no individual. But had they been furnished, the British would probably have been checked and repulsed, in their third attack, as they were in the two former. The enemy could boast only of having gained possession of the field for which they contended. But it was not without double the

* General Keyes was living in the state of New York a short time since.

† Two colonels and a major of artillery were censured for remissness of duty. The artillery was in a very imperfect state, which furnished some apology for the inefficiency of the officers, though one of them was justly blamed. The two colonels were evidently deficient in that zeal and activity, by which all the others engaged were distinguished.

number of men to those whom they engaged. And they were convinced, by melencholy facts, that the provincials were too brave to be despised, or to be attacked except by superior numbers, and with every advantage of a competent artillery and a full supply of military stores. Though the American troops remained for several months almost wholly without cannon, and deficient, to an alarming degree, of the essential article of powder, the British made no attack upon their lines, nor attempted any offensive operations.



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